

Message Text

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72

ACTION NEA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

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INFO SECDEF

AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI

UNCLAS ATHENS 1834

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, US, GR

SUBJECT: UNEVENTFUL INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION

1. SUMMARY. GREECE'S MAJOR PATRIOTIC HOLIDAY, INDEPENDENCE DAY, WAS CELEBRATED MARCH 25 WITH CUSTOMARY PUBLIC CEREMONIES AND PARADES THROUGHOUT COUNTRY IN PERFECT SPRING WEATHER. ATHENS PARADE INCLUDED MORE TROOPS THAN USUAL, LED BY MILITARY POLICE BATTALION, WHERE CROWD WAS SOMEWHAT SMALLER THAN IN PAST AND ITS RESPONSE RESTRAINED
END SUMMARY

2. GREECE'S 153RD ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE WAS MARKED WITH USUAL FESTIVITIES - PARADES, SCHOOL PROGRAMS, MUSIC, AND RELIGIOUS THANKSGIVING - THROUGHOUT NATION. OFFICIAL TE DEUM AND MAJOR MILITARY PARADES TOOK PLACE IN ATHENS AND THESSALONIKI.

3. AMERICAN REPRESENTATION IN OFFICIAL FUNCTIONS ATHENS INCLUDED CHARGE, NAVY ATTACHE, ASSISTANT AIR AND ARMY ATTACHES, AND CHIEF JUSMAGG. PARADE IN CAPITAL RAN ABOUT 75 MINUTES AND INCLUDED STUDENT MARCHING GROUPS, USUAL AND EXTENSIVE MILITARY ROLLING STOCK, AND MORE MILITARY MARCHING UNITS THAN IN RECENT YEARS. MILITARY PORTION
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OF PARADE WAS LED BY ESA BATTALION, WHICH WAS MUCH LARGER

UNIT THAN RECENT YEARS. NATIONAL TELEVISION COVERAGE INCLUDED EXTENSIVE PRAISE OF MEN OF ESA AND IDENTIFICATION OF ITS KEY INTERNAL SECURITY ROLE

4. HOLIDAY WEEKEND STARTED WITH FLYING VISIT BY PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER TO LATTER'S HOME AREA OF KALAMATA FOR CEREMONIES MARCH 23 WHICH IS ANNIVERSARY OF LIBERATION THAT CITY. EMBASSY LOCAL EMPLOYEE WHO CHANCED TO VISIT CITY DURING CELEBRATIONS REPORTED RESTRAINED APPLAUSE FOR DIGNITARIES AND THOUGHT THAT POPULAR FEELINGS FOCUSED ON TRADITIONAL PATRIOTIC ASPECTS OF OBSERVANCE MORE THAN INTEREST IN VIPS

5. SIZE OF STREET CROWDS AND THEIR REACTION IN ATHENS SOMEWHAT LESS IMPRESSIVE FROM TURNOUTS RECENT YEARS. NEW ELEMENT WAS PRESIDENT GHIZIKIS, ERECT IN MILITARY UNIFORM, REPLACING CIVILIAN-GARBED PAPADOPOULOS IN THE CEREMONIAL POSITION AT CATHEDRAL, RECEPTION, AND PARADE REVIEW

6. TV COVERAGE UNINSPIRED WITH NO EFFORT EITHER TO COVER PUBLIC REACTION, SIZE OF CURBSTONE AUDIENCE, APPLAUSE, ETC., OR TO IDENTIFY DIPLOMATIC AND FOREIGN MILITARY DIGNITARIES WHICH INCLUDED TWO NATO COMMANDERS, GENERAL MELVIN ZAIS, COMMANDER LANDSOUTHEAST HEADQUARTERS, IZMIR, AND LT. GEN. MOATS, 6TH ATAF COMMANDER, IZMIR. SO FAR GOG HAS NOT MADE PUBLIC ANY CONGRATULATORY MESSAGES FROM ABROAD

7. SMALLER PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN ATHENS COULD HAVE BEEN TO SOME DEGREE MANIFESTATION OF ATTITUDE TOWARD REGIME BUT EXCEPTIONALLY FINE WEATHER AFTER LONG RAINY PERIOD AND LIFTING OF PRIVATE CAR CIRCULATION RESTRAINTS FOR LONG WEEKEND ALSO LED TO MANY ATHENIANS LEAVING CITY. BRANDIN

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